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Business

*A Plain Talk with Men and
Women who Work*

Amos R. Wells

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BUSINESS

A PLAIN TALK
WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORK

BY

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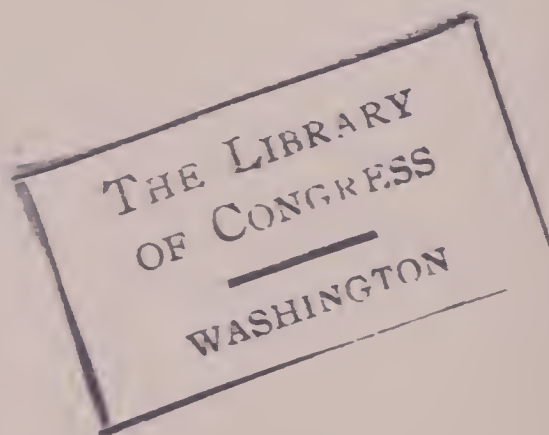
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BUSINESS:

A PLAIN TALK WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORK.

A BOY twelve years old, the unlearned son of an untaught Jewish carpenter, is found by his unlearned mother talking wisely with wise doctors of the law in the temple. When she upbraids him for deserting the home-bound party he answers—he, the untaught carpenter's son—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

"Your father's business, lad, is not with books, but with benches; not with the law, but with the saw; not with men, but with matter."

"Wist you not, mother, that I must be about my Father's business?"

"Your father's business, strange boy, is

hammering nails into wood, not truth into the hearts of men. And he gets money for it, which is better even than the approval of these great scholars of the Bible."

"Wist ye not, neighbors, that I must be about my Father's business?"

"Is the boy demented, or has Joseph turned sage without our knowledge? Come, lad, back with your weeping mother to your father's shop; there help him as is your wont, and grow up to be as good a carpenter as he is. Don't get above your father's business."

So it was that Christ went up again to Nazareth, and was subject to his parents, until the Baptist had prepared his way, and he could enter in due course his Father's business.

The American Noun.

This first recorded saying of our blessed Lord contains the American noun. Do you know the American noun? It is "business." And the American adjective is "business-like."

Do you doubt it? Go into any city you please. On what errand are these hurrying thousands bent? Business. What fills the minds of most of them? Business. For six days in the week what fills their crowded daylight? Business.

Their evenings, even when wife and children bring in love and cheer—what lies beneath it all as a harsh, fretting, harassing undertone? Business. Their Sundays, even in the most sacred place—God's Word in their ears from singing choir and holy priest—what enters imperatively, and pulls the soul from its attitude of prayer, and holds the hands from their grasp on heaven? Business.

When they meet, what forms the staple of their talk? Their business. What occupies half their daily paper? Business advertisements. What question is most frequently asked of a man's character? "Does he attend to business?" And of a man's results? "Is he successful in business?"

It is held to be a reproach to a man if he

is not engaged in some business, and it is considered a matter to be proud of if the man manages his business successfully, and sticks to it till the funeral knell rings out from the belfry.

Being Driven by Business.

“Ah, but a man must drive his business,” one says, “or his business will drive him.”

You are quite of the mind of the man in Christ’s parable, who could not go to the feast because he had to drive some oxen. That man thought he was driving his business—his oxen—but he wasn’t; his ox-business was driving him.

That is a terrible thing to happen to any business man—to be driven by his business; it would be ludicrous if it were not so really terrible. Haven’t you seen the transformation in scores of cases? The young man starts out with flashing eye and eager hand, proudly directing the ox—his business—in the furrow before him. But, ere many a year has passed, the erect back, that was at

right angles to the present and fronting the future, has become parallel to the present; goes down, down, down, toward the furrow—the rut. His eager, manly hand grows horny, hard; the fingers adhere, solidify—hoofs. His feet, that so proudly pressed the loam, are other hoofs—plod, plod, plod.

The pressure of the yoke upon the neck—a heavy yoke. The pressure of the harness against the sides. The pull of the plow as it wrenches its way through the tough soil. The stinging call of the driver lashing from behind. And that driver, alert, imperative, merciless, exacting, that driver is *the ox*. That driver is the business which the poor man flatters himself he is driving, but which is driving him.

Are We in Harness?

How can we tell when we are driving our business, and when our business is driving us? In the first place, let us ask ourselves, Is it easy to escape from our business? At night can we lock it up in our desks, bar it

up in our stores, and ride home free men? Or does our business sit down in the cars beside us without waiting to ask, "Is this seat reserved, sir?"

As we look out upon the beautiful landscape, does our business hang head downward from the car roof, and grin in at us through the car window? As we plod heavily to our homes, does our business stick to our backs like an old man of the sea, and refuse to be shaken off? As the family gathers about the evening meal, is this same obtrusive stranger present, snatching like a harpy half the food from our mouths, and poisoning the remainder of it?

And does he even pursue us to our beds, hang choking about our necks, stick his long finger into our brains and set them whirling in the darkness, and leave us about two o'clock only to spend the rest of the night in concocting for us a headache for a morning gift? Do we find our business thus difficult to shake off? Surely, then, we are in the

harness ; we are not driving our business, but our business is driving us.

Have We Animal Spirits ?

In the second place, let us ask ourselves about our animal spirits. I never could see why they are called animal spirits, when so few animals possess them. Puppies have them, and kittens, and lambs, and colts, and calves ; but when the puppy has become a watch-dog, and the kitten a mouser, and the lamb has been sheared a few times, and the colt and the calf have become draft-horse and yoked ox, they no longer have animal spirits, but bestial spirits.

Such is the fate of the animal spirits of a man when he, too, becomes a beast of burden. If he has hold of the plow-handles he may dance in the furrow ; but not if he is pulling the plow.

Really, one of the most solemn, serious, and momentous questions a man can ask himself is this : " Is it becoming easier or

harder for me to laugh?" If harder, he's down in the furrow, and the harness is closing about him.

One of the most valuable of human faculties is the capacity for a game. It is becoming more valuable every year, as our business becomes more aggressive and intolerant. Some day—before long, too, I hope—there will rise up a great educational reformer, another Horace Mann, who will introduce into all our business colleges and technical schools a thorough course in the art of recreation.

Why not? How few of our business men know how to put back into themselves what they have taken out, with a prodigal hand, during the day! More than that: how few even recognize such a need! Shrewd in retaining a fat balance at the banker's, in adding to their reserve funds, they carry but a lean balance in their bodies and spirits, and have no reserve fund whatever. Poor men! Poor men! How sadly their drafts on themselves are going to protest, some day!

A wise farmer practices better bookkeeping with the ox that he drives. He gives him rest enough and food enough to recreate his body for the plow. But the business that drives so many business men is a master less wise. His schedule admits no time for recreation, nor do his plans admit the thought of it. There exists no sillier spendthrift than the passion for business—spendthrift of brain and body, years and cheer, happiness and hopefulness. Poor, bankrupt men in the harness!

Looking Up or Down.

But in the third place, if we want to find out whether we are driven by our business or are the drivers ourselves, let us ask most seriously and answer most frankly this question: Are we looking up or down?

Beasts of burden look down. However often Concord seers have advised men to hitch their wagons to the stars, there yet remains to be invented a harness that is conducive to star-gazing. Our blessed re-

ligion finds nothing so worldly that it cannot transform it with the touch of things heavenly. Yet, just the same, it remains true that such transformation is needed before things worldly become heavenly.

There is nothing inherently spiritual and uplifting in any harness, plow, or furrow. The plowshare may turn down a daisy, but the ox knows nothing of it—nor does the poet, if the ox is driving him. The ledger's neat pages and accurate columns have in them no satisfying joy, save to the soul that is in love with that heaven whose first law is order. Bright windows, fresh carpets, spotless furniture—all that a housewife may reckon among her triumphs of cleanliness—will give her satisfaction only as she is getting hold of that godliness which is the next-door neighbor of cleanliness.

There is no worldly occupation whose natural gravity is other than the gravity of the world, pulling down to the selfsame center. On the contrary, there is no worldly

occupation into which the sky may not fall, with all the stars of glory.

Double need, then, of asking whether we have in our business the downward look of one in the harness, or the upward look of one at the plow-handles. Is prayer an instinct with us, or a duty? Is the church an interruption to the shop, or the shop, if anything, an interruption to the church? Is it harder to tear ourselves from the reading of our Bible or of our newspaper?

Is the thought of death distasteful to us? Do we drown out the appealing eternities with our 1893's and our 1894's? Do we seek to make amends for the loss of interior religion with punctiliousness regarding the exterior requirements?

Which worries us most, loss of goodness or loss of goods? a fall from grace or a fall of stocks? Which interests us most, the conversion of a soul to Christ or the conversion of a note into cash? Does the world appear more to us like a stepping-stone or

like a finality? Are we coming to feel more and more at home in the thought of heaven, and the angels, and the life of the spirit?

Judging not by our acts or our professions, but by our appetites, our honest preferences, the apportionment of our time and our zeal, is our look upward or downward? If the latter, the yoke is pressing on our necks, the plow is pulling down on the harness, our business is driving us, we are not driving our business.

Our Petty Tasks.

Now energy, as far as it goes, allies us with the Father, who “worketh hitherto” as Christ worked. To be sure, there is no possibility that a man may work as hard or toil as constantly as the Master Workman of the universe. Be fervent in spirit and diligent in business as we will—as fervent and diligent as Paul himself—yet our fervency will fall far below God’s sun, and our diligence far below his rain. God is at work in his world while we are sleeping and while

we are resting, in storm and calm, under the snow as well as under the blossoms.

How absurd for man, no matter how capable of labor, no matter how industrious, to be conceitedly proud of a day's work! All the work of all the days of all the men who ever lived upon this earth would not accomplish one minute of God's gigantic tasks. "The Father worketh hitherto, and I work. I must be about my Father's business." Christ could say that, for he could still God's tempests, he could turn water into wine, he could summon the fishes of the sea, he could multiply loaves of bread, and wither fig-trees at a glance. Christ had command of the Father's resources of labor; he could handle the Father's tools. But how foolish for us pygmies to say, as in our pride of industry we virtually often say, "The Father worketh hitherto, and we work."

We look up at the towering walls of our mills, we hear the thunder of the vast machinery within, we see cars and great ships carrying the product over the world,

and in the rush of traffic, the complexity of our big ledgers, the largeness of our bank account, we get to thinking our business enormous and noteworthy. When we look down from heaven some day on all our little affairs here, they will surely seem more trivial than our school-day sports seem to us now, with their snowball houses, their mock courts, their pomp of paper regimentals.

A Look Ahead.

I would have you think with me a moment, careworn man of business; I would have you consider with me a moment, busy housewife, thronged, with many tasks: consider the time that soon is coming, that surely is coming to us all.

Is your business farming? Fancy your life a few brief years from now, without soil, fences, horses, plows; with no seed to sow, no harvests to reap; no more to do with stubborn matter, no more to do with the fruitful elements.

There are farmers who plant and till God's

vineyard and sow good seed in the hearts of his children, at the same time that they follow the plow in the furrow or ride the clattering reaper. That farming goes right on in the spirit-land. But who can imagine the emptiness of existence that must befall at death a farmer whose thought has been only of matter, only of wheat and barns and pigs, when all these things have slipped away into nothingness? What and where will be his business then?

Possibly your business is that of a teacher or a student. Are you so bent on those pursuits that your books have become your real world, and languages or sciences, history or mathematics, your chief interests? Are you busy constantly with pen and paper, with encyclopedia and dictionary? Is "scholar" your noblest name?

There are scholars whose studies are of the soul, of God, of life and death; those studies go right on. But what will you do when you enter the spirit-land, where lip-language is clumsy indeed compared with heart-lan-

guage, where botany and geology and astronomy pass with the passing of the world, and the history of our wars and heroes is all like a nursery tale? You, whose life is your lore, what sort of existence are you making ready for yourself in that land where the least child of trustful heart may be wiser in all true lore than your wildest dreams of science ever fancied possible? What will you think, in that day, of your business here on earth?

Or you may be a mechanic, as Christ was. Your fingers may have bent themselves to the shape of the saw-handle. You may have become merely the human cog in some great machine. Hammer and tongs, anvil and forge, wheel and graver, may have become added organs of your body, so thoroughly are they parts of you. Is your life confined to these things?

Christ's was not. Doubtless the joints he made were neat and firm. Doubtless his work was well done and quickly done. Doubtless he was not above his work in any

evil sense; and yet how grandly he was above his work! Are you at work as he was, young carpenter, on the "many mansions," while you build these mansions of wood and stone?

Are you, young machinist, managing with your wheels of steel and belts of rubber the belts and wheels of human character, and with your product of cloth or thread or pins or boots is there to your credit a rich result of noble living and fine inspiration of others? That manufacturing continues, we know, when the last factory fire is out, and the sun, the source of all factory power, is dead. But if this is not so, and your whole life whirls with your wheel and is wrapped up in your packages, no vacuum the strongest air-pump can make is as empty as your existence will be when you get to a machineless world, where tools and wheels and bands are not.

Or are you at work in a home? Are the cares of a Martha yours? Is your life a dull round of fire-building, cooking, washing

dishes, making beds, sweeping, sewing—these, and such as these, and nothing else? What will the Marthas do when food is no longer to be cooked, when the garments need no mending, the golden floors no sweeping?

“We shall rest,” I hear them say, with longing for that time. They have learned on earth, however, if they have had a chance to try it, that nothing is so melancholy as resting with nothing to do, especially when one enters that rest from a very busy life. There is no rest except in change of interests and variety of pursuits. All other rest is merely an exchange of weariness for weariness.

But what will those Marthas do whose lives have had no share of Mary’s better part, which cannot be taken away from her? What will the Marthas do when they get to a world without house-cleaning and cooking-stoves? This may seem to some a trivial question. To me, indeed, it is a very sad and solemn one, as I think of some

women I have known whose immortal souls are to all appearances "packed into a narrow act," as Browning says. They have few thoughts which may not be symbolized by a dish-cloth.

Now housework is noble, dignified, holy, when it is not merely housework—when with the darning of stockings go smiles of sympathy; when food for the spirit is prepared by the house-mother as well as food for the body; when as much thought is given to the purity of the souls about her as to the purity of her kitchen floors. In that case all of these lower ministries fit in with and assist the higher. But when the lower end with themselves, they are like a ladder reaching vaguely up into the air, the end resting on nothing.

Busy? Yes. I can think of no one that can contrive to be so fiercely busy as a care-burdened mistress of a house, with its vast crowd of petty tasks. And I can think of no business so melancholy as hers, if its pettiness is not allied in some way to large

interests, and the transient nature of all her acts is not dignified by eternal purposes.

Will it stand Transplanting?

We cannot review all the occupations of men. The story of them all is the same. They all deal with trivial, fleeting, worldly matters, which may be transformed into business worthy of immortal souls. Ten, twenty, thirty years from now, and the most learned lawyer will have no more use for his law library and his briefs. He will have passed to a land of peace, to the court of the great Judge.

By that time the sweetest poet will have forgotten his noblest songs in order to learn the nobler songs of the angels. By that time the doctors will have lost their formulas, their principles of diagnosis, their memory of earth's fevers and consumptions, for every one is well there. The preacher's sermons will all be left behind in the dusty secretary. The musician will not remember

earth's pianos and organs, lost in delight at the harp of a thousand strings.

Ten, forty, fifty years, and our books will be balanced, our garments laid aside, our houses echoing to the tread of other feet, our tools clasped by other hands; our brief and hurried life here will be transplanted to another world, about which we know little, to be sure, and yet this thing most certainly: that it will be a world of spirit, and not of matter; that in it our earthly business will have no place, but the Father's business be preëminent. Ten, forty, fifty years from now, and we may many of us wish—with oh, what bitterness of regret!—that we knew more about our Father's business.

We are skilled in our business here; shall we be skilled in our Father's business there, or must we with infinite sorrow do our work there awkwardly? Here we are the superintendents, the overseers, of others. There shall we be counted with apprentices? Here our work wins praise for its ef-

ficiency. There, will all the hosts of heaven pity us for our clumsiness, and try lovingly to help us out of our crudities?

Is our business here the business of the Father, so that it will stand transplanting? Ten, forty, fifty years from now we shall see that there is no more important question for us in all God's universe than that.

What is "Our Father's Business"?

And so I must go on to ask, What is the Father's business? It is not enough to say that it deals with things permanent as opposed to things transient. Nor is it enough to say that it deals with matters of infinite scope as opposed to the confined events of the material universe. All that is vague; and surely Christ had something very definite before him when he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" What did Christ consider his Father's business?

To preach good tidings to the poor. To proclaim release to the captives, and recover-

ing of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. To seek and to save that which was lost. Not to be ministered unto, but to minister. To give his life a ransom for many. That our joy might be full. That all should know the Father, and the Son whom he had sent. To call sinners to repentance.

He had not where to lay his head. He counted it blessed to be reviled and persecuted, to mourn, to be the least of all and the servant of all, to carry a heavy cross. It was his meat, and often his only meat, to do the will of his Father. As that will opened out before him, in the wilderness and on the mount, in temple and synagogue and publican's house, by precipice and seaside, in storm and calm, with "Hosanna!" or "Crucify him!" with frankincense or vinegar, in manger or the new tomb wherein no man yet had lain—as God's will opened out before him, his business was—to do it.

He took no anxious thought for the

morrow ; he knew that his hour had not yet come ; and when it came he could say that his business on earth was finished, and yet could look forward to its instant continuance, with the words, " This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

There is no need that I should try to paint that blessed life, that life which is our despair in its perfection at the same time that it is our sufficient hope in its promises. With it as our model, with Christ's practicing of his Father's business before our eyes, how are we to set about it, and how must we modify our business habits to conform to it? How can we, too, be about our Father's business?

Our Business Manual.

In the first place, we must get our business education. You know what the textbook is. To what book but the Bible could we go to learn about the Father's business?

And yet how little reading of the Bible is for power! How little of it is business-

like! How little is with a clear purpose, seeking definite results!

In this blessed book—so has run the testimony of the Father's business men for centuries—has been found their wisest instruction and mightiest inspiration. It has been their manual, their handbook, their directory to all their ways of endeavor.

You know that there are men who have what is known as the "business sense." They can tell by intuition when an enterprise will be profitable, when a visitor will purchase, where an advertisement will pay. There are others whose business ventures are at blank haphazard, and fail as often as they succeed.

This "business sense" in religious matters is one thing gained by a constant study of the Bible. One gets to know by intuition, after years of companionship with the Book of books, just what deeds will further his Master's interest, and what will be out of harmony with his business. The old Bible-reader does not need to argue or meditate,

when a course of conduct is before him, as to its bearing on his Father's business. As promptly as the experienced merchant tells the traveling salesman, "That's what we want," or, "That we cannot deal in," so promptly can an experienced Bible-reader decide on his course of action.

The importance of this cannot be over-estimated, in our delicately poised world, where a badly planned event may wreck a life; where roads diverge so gradually that we get into the devil's path before we know it; where corners are so common, and such momentous interests depend on our following the right way. To feel sure in our hearts, "That God would have me do; that God would have me avoid," surely this is a blessing worth striving for; and I know of no way of getting it but by studying God's business manual, the blessed Scriptures.

Yet this were little if this were all. The Bible tells us far more than what to do; it tells us how to do it. You may say what you will about the age of the Bible; you

may ask how—so long before cards were used for gambling, or the first stock exchange was built, or the modern theatre organized, or the first lottery ticket printed, or the first ballot cast on the Australian system—you may ask how this antiquated volume can possibly be a guide in our complex modern life.

Your question is answered by the experience of millions, who would join with me in the hearty statement that they know no book, no pamphlet—nay, not even the latest edition of the most vigorous newspaper—that is so fully abreast with the times as the Bible—abreast, and leagues ahead.

I have never met a social problem, however complicated with the latest fashions and the newest vice, that its principles would not solve. I have never yet seen a weak spot in the most intricate modern machinery that Bible principles would not strengthen. Spiritual truth is as eternal as physical truth. If Moses had discovered the law of gravitation, and Newton, far

later, the Ten Commandments, you would hardly distrust that physical truth because Moses discovered it so long ago.

This book is a manual of action for our civilization as complete as for the Grecian and the Roman. No book can take its place, if we are to do our Father's business. No book in all this world's history has even pretended to take its place.

I plead for a larger reading and studying of it. Bible-classes should be as largely attended by the old as by the young. A Sunday-school which contains fifty young people should contain fifty old people.

We think nothing of reading large pages of fine print about our secular business—the prices of goods, the state of the market, the fashion magazine, the housekeeper's journal, the report of the town council or the insurance company. It would startle most of us, I fear, if we were required to spend as much time daily in reading up our Father's business, which is preëminently ours. The entire New Testament, you know, was

once printed in a single issue of a daily paper.

Bible reading goes by inches; secular reading, by feet and yards. Bible reading goes by verses; secular reading, by long articles. What Christian who spends an hour a day in reading would not consider me insane if I deliberately proposed his reading the Bible for half of that hour, in the interests of his business? What *do* we consider our business, when it comes to facts and habits? Are we in earnest, you and I, about our Father's business? Then in long hours by ourselves and in classes with others, with wise commentaries, too, to assist our duller brains, let us study our business manual.

Our Business College.

But our business education must not be confined to a text-book. What is the best training-school for the Father's business? Beyond comparison, the prayer-meeting. Here we learn to use our tongues. Here

we learn to use our brains. Here we begin to see how to make the contact between the Bible we have been studying and the people who need its help.

The prayer-meeting is the clearing-house, the stock exchange of the Father's business. I have a helpful thought and I give it to you; you have one and you give it to me; and God's business is doubly profited by the transfer.

In the prayer-meeting you learn new business methods. This man does God's business by arguing. You get points from him. This man works by force of character. You get points from him. This man accomplishes his results by means of spiritual sweetness and light, this by practical common sense, this by energy and zeal, this by persuasiveness. In the prayer-meeting exchange you get points from all and give a little help to all in turn.

Have you ever passed from a town that has none of that mysterious thing called public spirit to a town that has it? In

the former the saloons multiply for lack of opposition, the cows run the streets, grass grows on the sidewalks, water breeds disease in filthy pools. In the second everything is clean, neat, bright, and prosperous. There is a village improvement society, a building association, a town paper, a town library and reading circle, a lecture association.

The difference springs simply from the fact that in the second town two or three—yes, twenty or thirty—are wont to meet together in the town's name and for its interests, and the spirit of enterprise and progress is in the midst of them. Public spirit in Christ's kingdom is conditioned on the meeting together in his name, with him in the midst of the meeting.

If the comparison we might make between our reading for our secular business and for our Father's business is to the disadvantage of the latter, how much less favorably does our zeal in coöperation for God's work compare with the energy wherewith we push our schemes for secular improvement!

The city of God which lies in our town—I fear if we could see it in material guise we should find its streets grass-grown, its sewers stagnant, its buildings in decay. The citizens of that city need to organize a board of trade, or, rather, put life into the one already organized, the prayer-meeting. A new plan for rapid transit is broached in a crowded city; a new town-hall is under discussion in a town; street lighting is proposed in a little village: and straightway arises more eager, thoughtful, strenuous, business-like debating over that matter than the Father's business is likely to get for a year. We are not in earnest or half in earnest about our Father's business until we have given ourselves a thorough business training for it, in Bible study and prayer-meeting work.

Our Partner.

But in entering upon our Father's business we must have a partner; and who should the partner be but our Father himself? Oh, that I could express half of whta

this should mean to us—partnership with the Lord of the universe! We do not believe it, though we profess to believe it. It is too good to believe.

We say to each other: "I am going to my work." "Now I will set about my business." "I have so much to do to-day." Never do we say, with glad recognition of our heavenly partnership, "*We* are going to *our* work; *we* have much to do to-day, but it is a mere trifle compared with *our* power of doing it."

We profess companionship and live loneliness. Our creeds claim constant help and dependence; our words and feelings speak of helpless independence.

If a Christian can honestly say of a task, "It is *my* business, *I* must about it," then it is not his business as a Christian, and the sooner he gives it the go-by the better. Nothing is the Christian's business unless it is the Father's business also. Nothing is the Christian's business to which he must go alone.

What a blessing this is you cannot know

until you have known the horrors of isolation. Learn what it means to have no human adviser, no friend near to direct you, no overseer to plan for you, no one to take an interest in your work, praise its virtues and point out its faults. Your life, indeed, has been singularly fortunate if it has not at any time reached such a point of isolation. Many of us have known it often.

But no one need know it ever. That is the message of Christianity. No one need be left alone, with his single courage and unhelped power, to contend with this jostling world. Every man or woman or child who sincerely enters upon his Father's business may have in it a partnership that means no despondency, no uncertainty, no friendlessness, no isolation, no weakness, no worry, but continual good cheer and power and fearlessness. He goes about his work with a laughing heart and a hand that never falters. That partnership we must have, or we shall never succeed in the Father's business.

Our Capital.

And for the Father's business we must have some capital, as well as for earthly enterprises. What our Father contributes we can never measure—infinities of love, immensities of power, boundless resources of ingenuity and skill and wisdom. But what capital can we add worth even the mention?

First and chiefly there is faith—faith as a grain of mustard seed, that can remove mountains; faith full-grown, that can lay hold on God's utmost, and move worlds.

We deny God's word when we doubt the importance of this contribution to the joint capital. Faith dies without works, but works never even come to birth without faith. If we are to do God's business in this world we must have faith to believe it worth doing, faith to believe ourselves able to do it, faith that God will send fruitage to our sowing, permanence to our building.

If God's business in this world cannot be done without this petty human faith of ours,

as it surely cannot, then human faith is anything but petty. No matter what wonderful gifts to the carrying out of his plans God may make, there must be something wonderful, too, in our gift to the enterprise. And indeed we might well be proud of our mighty human faith, did we not suspect, and more than suspect, that in some inscrutable way it also is the gift of the Most High to our needs.

And so we must add something else to the joint capital, something without which faith will soon pass into presumption and bravado—that is, humility.

When we are weak we are strong: marvelous business formula that! How would it work in other business than this strange business of our Father's? When a stockbroker feels weak, undecided, helpless—then is he strong? Will the formula work for the general, the lawyer, the doctor? Only as all these are Christians, and have brought their doctoring, generalship, pleading, and brokerage into subordination to the Father's

business and under his paradoxical business laws.

The humility of God's natural world, which opens wide arms to the inflowing of God's power—that we must contribute to the spiritual capital of the Father's business.

We must contribute love also. That is something that rarely enters the assets of earthly firms. It is hardly put down in the invoice. "Each preferring others to himself": that motto will not do for worldly counters. "The last shall be first, the servant be the chief": that is hardly the law of trade, except where trade is Christianized.

But love is the basis of the Father's business, the motive which seeks the power that faith supplies and humility retains. A sense of duty will not keep us engaged for a single day in the Father's business. Neither will a feeling of gratitude. Neither will fear. Nothing will but love of God and love of our brother, the helping of whom is God's loving business and ours.

Just one thing more we must contribute

to this capital, and that is perseverance. God's business meets with reverses, because the reverses are in God's plan for his business. Strange business, this, which contrives and seeks its own failures! Yet just as a mechanic, to drill his apprentice, often has him set to work on the knottiest timber with inadequate tools, and sometimes gives him impossible orders that he may learn what tools to use and what tasks to attempt, so the Father often permits us, his partners, to gain the surest of all knowledge, the knowledge that comes from failure.

He asks us to contribute perseverance. How can he form wise and far-reaching plans for us, indeed, until he can count on our dauntlessness? How can he enter into partnership with us and intrust us with a share in his business, while we are likely to fail him at the first reverses? The bull-dog courage that never loses its hold—that we must contribute to the Father's business. Four things: love, the motive to work; faith, that gets power for work; humility

and perseverance, that maintain faith's hold on power—those make up our capital.

Our Hours of Work.

What are the hours of work in this business of our Father's? The average Christian thinks he does well if he devotes every seventh day to the Father's business, and that day spent to a large extent in talking gossip, reading newspapers, taking walks, and eating big dinners. The seventh day is given us as a rest-day, rather, to prepare us for doing our Father's business the other six days of the week.

When Christ demanded of us all our mind, heart, strength, he demanded of us also all our time. "All our time!" you exclaim in dismay. "All our time, and do nothing else?" Certainly. Strength and mind and soul are exercised in time, and make up time to us. If our Father's business fails of part of our time, it fails of part of our strength and mind and soul.

"But what are we to do with our other

business?" you ask. And that brings me to the chief thing I wanted to say to you: We are to have no other business.

There comes a time in almost every Christian's life when he realizes the tragic earnestness, the tremendous import of Christ's saying, "Ye cannot serve two masters." In that day there comes to him the thought most solemn of all mortal thoughts, the thought of the eternal years. In that day he sees clearly that there is no compromising with the eternal years. Either they are to rule his life utterly, the thought of them governing all his acts and influencing all his plans, or the very belief in them must be essentially annihilated, and he must live as if the grave ended all, must eat and drink, for to-morrow comes nothingness.

When one has determined on a trip across the ocean, how indifferent he becomes to the weeds in the garden, the amount of water in the cistern, the plans for the next entertainment! In the presence of the great new fact much of his life is shuffled from him,

and becomes at once to his eye as petty and trivial as it will seem from across the Atlantic. Somewhat in the same way much of our ordinary business becomes inconsequential to us when we allow our thoughts to turn toward the flood of years. Nothing seems of much moment now but our preparations for that voyage. All our time seems now too short for the Father's business.

The World's Business: A Prophecy.

This experience of the single man, the solitary Christian, here and there, is to become the experience of the happy world. There is to come a glad day when the college doors will be closed, the factories hushed, the wheels of the locomotives still, the steamships motionless, the printing-presses idle, looms and pens and gravers and saws and brushes and needles all put away, the business of this earth at a standstill. What happens to the individual will have happened to the world.

In that time of clear seeing all nations,

struck with amazement at the pettiness of the tasks on which they have been wasting these brief years of life, will have thrown down their tools and rushed to take up the Father's business. In that hour the rich will wrap warm garments about the poor, and will sweep their tables bare to feed the hungry. In that hour the wise will leave their libraries and the pure their kneeling-stools, and will enter the foulest dens of vice, and plead with and instruct the most ignorant and vile.

There will be no newspapers, for men will be too busy making history to write it or read it. There will be no great paintings, for the artists will all have set to work to paint God's image afresh on blurred souls. There will be no great books, for all men's minds will be centered on the one Book. There will be no great works of industry, no marvels of mechanism, no Eiffel towers or Washington monuments or Brooklyn bridges or electric lights or electric cars.

Civilization will have gone back to its

first elements: will have perished, indeed. There will be nothing left of our complex worldly business but just enough to feed the body, clothe it and shelter it, and keep it strong for the Father's business.

We have books enough; gems, silks, paintings, palaces, furniture, dishes enough; rare and curious inventions enough. Our Christian civilization will in that glad day cease to produce these things. We need no more of them; we need more of Christ. Ten years—*ten years* of thorough-going devotion to the Father's business would bring in the millennium, would cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The Christian world will see this, too, some day; will lay aside its superfluities, will content itself with bare necessities, will devote its entire time and strength and skill to the Father's business.

And then—after every sot has been lifted from the gutter, every hard heart softened, every tear wiped away, the idle set to the

joys of labor, the silent brought to utterance, the doubter to the truth, after every rich man has been taught the delight of giving and every poor man the grace of receiving, after all the hungry are fed, the homeless sheltered, the weary rested, the naked clothed, the fearful comforted—then from the tomb of that civilization buried with Christ will come forth such a civilization as earth has never imagined.

Then poets will sing as the angels, wise men have clear vision into the deepest secrets of nature, mechanics learn mastery over God's mightiest forces. Then most marvelous pictures will be painted, and richest homes be built, and from all hearts of redeemed mankind will rise the heaven-born hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men!" Then all the world will be about the Father's business.

At Work for Eternity.

That day, foretold by clear-eyed prophets of old and sure to come, will come only as

you and I, in our single lives, have faith and love and bravery enough to resign the business of the world, or rather transform it into the Father's business. It cannot come otherwise. The kingdom comes as a grain of mustard seed, as a bit of leaven hid in three measures.

Will we dare it, for Christ's sake, for the world's sake? Can we forego wealth and men's applause and ease, live plainly, dress simply, accept most modest houses, use no luxuries, see others outstrip us in the race for money, power, and place, hear ourselves called visionaries, fanatics, hypocrites, self-righteous? Can we do all this and forego all this, that our Father's business may prosper in our hands? Can we forget our business behind us, and, looking forward to the things that are before us, can we press toward this mark of our high calling, our high business, in Christ Jesus?

If we can, then perfect peace is ours, then an infinite power will flood all our weakness, an ecstasy inexpressible will fill our veins, doubt will give place to assurance and in-

decision to confidence, and we can do all things—all our Father's business—through Christ who strengthens us. Then all our work will be changed into a holiday—a holy day—and all our ignoble dreams of decaying wealth and fleeting fame and empty power will be lost in the glad expectation of that day when we may hear our Master saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The business men of some communities are compelled to have three hands in their watches, the third pointing to standard time. Let us, business men and women, add a third hand to all our watches, and let our standard time be eternity.

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